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Shipping Your Product to the Overseas Buyer

ABSTRACT: Procedures and advice for shipping items to foreign markets are presented in this analysis. Before shipping a product, it may be desirable to arrange for the services of an international freight forwarder, who acts as an agent for the exporter in moving cargo to the overseas destination. With few exceptions, it is recommended that a freight forwarder licensed by the Federal Maritime Commission be engaged to move one's cargo from the US port of export. Also, before shipping, an export packing list, which is more detailed and informative than a standard domestic packing list, should be made out and affixed to the export item. With some exceptions, the inland transportation of an export order is handled the way a domestic one is. Three basic types of ocean service are available to exporters: 1. ocean freight conference, 2. independent lines, and 3. tramp vessels. Air freight carriers might also be considered if speed of delivery is important. The booking contract, which reserves space on a specified vessel for your cargo, may be made either by the exporter or the freight forwarder. Ocean marine cargo insurance is available in 2 forms: 1. a special one-time cargo policy insuring a specific shipment, and 2. an open or blanket cargo policy that remains in continuous effect and automatically insures all cargo moving at the seller's risk.

Anonymous

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Survey of Distribution Services (5): A connection restored / Rail systems

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TEXT:

British Rail has invested a lot of time and money in the last few years in attempting to win back a major share of the distribution market from the roads. But the corporation has been forced to mount this campaign against a background of major problems in its mainstream freight operations.

The root of the corporation's difficulties lies in the 1984 coal strike, which cost BR 250 m pounds sterling in lost revenue, leading to a total freight loss of 264 m pounds sterling in the 15 months to April 1985. This seriously affected the financial position by increasing interest charges by up to 13 m pounds sterling a year. Perhaps even more important, sympathetic action by railmen, some of whom refused to move coal stocks, caused a loss of confidence among customers which BR has found difficult to overcome.

Sir Robert Reid, BR chairman, recognised the extent of the problems facing the division in the 1985-86 annual report - a year when the corporation budgeted for a 38 m pounds sterling profit on freight operations but lost 17 m pounds sterling. Sir Robert conceded that revenue expected from coal restocking had not materialised, and noted: 'Intensive effort is being made to ensure that Rail-freight achieves its financial objectives. '

Foremost among these objectives is the requirement that freight services operate without public subsidy - a Government instruction sometimes not fully appreciated by the corporation's competitors. The level of operating return required from the freight sector has recently been reduced, however, from 5 per cent of net assets by 1988 to 2.7 per cent by 1989-90. This was widely interpreted as a recognition by Mr John Moore, the Transport Secretary, of the railway's difficulties and an attempt to set tough but attainable targets.

Against this background BR has fought to develop its two main freight services - Trainload, which offers complete trains for customers with large quantities to move; and Speedlink, a network of timetabled freight trains on which customers can book available space.

Speedlink is an attempt to move back into the general wagon-load business abandoned by BR in the 1960s, when customer dissatisfaction with its outmoded service led the corporation to concentrate on bulk train-loads. The trigger for the attempt to move back into distributing more customer-orientated goods was the decline in the manufacturing base in the early 1980s, and the consequent effect on bulk loads.

BR has established a network of private warehousing and distribution specialists with rail-connected depots which carry out road deliveries and associated activities such as stock control, order picking and multiple destination delivery. Alternatively, wagons can be routed direct to customer's private sidings, for which government grants are available where environmental benefits are likely.

Trunk haulage is carried out in a fleet of wagons with capacities of up to 29 tonnes (74 cubic metres). In addition, privately owned wagons with

capacities of up to 54 tonnes (112 cubic metres) are available for hire. Specialist vehicles for bulk products such as liquids and cereals are also available. Trains and wagons are monitored by Railfreight's computer control system, which allows wagons to be located within seconds.

Speedlink recognised that it was attacking a market where road transport was firmly entrenched, with the trade geared to its use. So it limited initial involvement to businesses where rail access already existed at both ends of the trunk network or could be installed reasonably cheaply.

The system met with early success in the food and drink and paper industries. Mr Stan Jud, Speedlink Distribution's national business manager, said customised distribution plans had been designed for a number of market leaders, including Guinness, Taunton Cider, Campbells Soups, Spillers Petfoods, and Wiggins Teape.

Guinness had virtually abandoned the private siding at its Park Royal brewery in west London before switching back to rail in 1984. Since then, the company has bought its own shunting engines from BR to marshal wagons for delivery around the UK.

In the long-term, maintaining BR's growth will be dependent on the creation of more rail connected premises. In an attempt to promote this, BR has set up a computer library of data on land available for development.

The intention of the library, known as Landbank, is to allow BR to bring rail to the attention of companies at an early stage in the distribution planning process, before they become locked into road-based alternatives.

BR is also keen to point out to potential customers that grants are available from the Government where the use of rail rather than road could bring environmental gains.

Mr Stephen Dargaval, a management consultant specialising in financial advice for rail freight developments, said the grants were designed to encourage investment where projects were fundamentally sound but the return on capital might otherwise be unacceptably low.

'We are receiving an increasing number of inquiries from development corporations and estate developers, who can see the advantages of a rail link as an additional selling point for development schemes,' he said.

'Logic suggests that if everything else is equal, a rail option should enhance rather than detract from its marketability.

Speedlink Distribution has also recently introduced a service called Minilink to offer inter-city door-to-door distribution of small loads, using five-tonne mini-containers and local delivery trucks.

Mr Mike Hames, Minilink project manager, said Speedlink had identified a gap in the market for a versatile and secure service for small loads. 'By co-operating with private industry - Kalmar Industries of Sweden, Scania and Leyland Trucks - we have developed a new service which can be used to penetrate this market and hopefully allow us to win more traffic to rail,' he said.

The basic unit of the Minilink system is an 11.8 cu metre container with doors on one face. The containers are carried on customised rail wagons between distribution points, where they are transferred to trucks for delivery to the customer.

The containers are fitted with collapsible legs, like a conventional demountable truck body, so that they can be left on customers' premises for

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loading or unloading. The containers are collected by trucks fitted with chassis-mounted, self-loading equipment and returned to the rail depot.

Initially, the service will operate nightly between depots in North London and Hillington, near Glasgow. It will be extended if successful.

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